

# HARNESSING CLOUD BENEFITS WITH CONFIDENCE

A case study of Skinny Mobile

The screenshot shows the Skinny Mobile website homepage. At the top, there's a dark header with the Skinny Mobile logo, navigation links for Shop, Combos, and Help, and user icons for Top Up, Login, and Search. The main banner is orange and features a smartphone deal: "Get a 4G smartphone & data deal for under \$100! Online only." It highlights a \$99 deal for a Huawei Ascend Y550 phone with a \$80 discount from \$179 and a one-off 2GB bonus data. Below the banner are three call-to-action boxes: "Get NZ's cheapest prepay 1GB data deal!", "NZ's Ultimate Prepay Monthly data Combo - hulloh!", and "Nab a 4G smartphone & data deal". The middle section contains three service highlights with icons: "We use the Spark network" (coverage map icon), "Rollover Minutes & Data" (person icon), and "Unlimited Calling to all Skinny mobiles" (two people talking icon). Each highlight has a "CHECK COVERAGE", "VIEW PRICING", or "FIND OUT MORE" button. At the bottom of this section is a large orange bar with the text "Do more with your mobile. Join Skinny today, it's easy!" and a "JOIN NOW" button.



Skinny Mobile is a New Zealand based prepay mobile provider. Skinny is a challenger brand focused on growth, last year alone over 158,000 new customers joined them. Skinny aim to give Kiwis more of what they want for less. In a nutshell, Skinny's whole reason for being is to strip everything back, so customers only pay for stuff you actually want. It's based on a model called common sense. As such Skinny is always looking for ways to reduce costs and improve value for their customers.



## Our challenge

Skinny Mobile does not own any brick-and-mortar stores, which creates savings for customers through lower overheads. This means their website is their storefront and a crucial business asset which provides a competitive edge in the fast moving telco market. It's vital that their site is kept running smoothly on a secure, reliable and high performing platform.

In 2014, Skinny redeveloped their website in partnership with DNA and SilverStripe. The new site required a complete redesign to create a simpler user experience. It would allow people to join Skinny without ever needing to call Skinny customer care or visit a store. Skinny

customers can now enjoy a simple online experience while complex system integrations are kept behind the scenes. The site was built on SilverStripe CMS and Framework with a number of backend systems tightly integrated with APIs (you can read more about the site development in this case study).

During this redevelopment the way the site was hosted and managed was also reviewed. Skinny needed a solution that suited their ambitious business plans and could grow with them. Their preference was to find a complete package that could solve all their website requirements. Paul Touhey, Skinny's CIO explains,

*"We prefer to keep our own team lean and use outsource partners who can bring in needed expertise. We selected DNA and SilverStripe as they could provide a one stop shop including design, build, hosting, support and future development. As well as delivering our new site it was important that they could manage the hosting with an experienced support team to keep it all running smoothly"*

*-Paul Touhey, Skinny CIO*

The previous site ran on an onsite hosted solution that was not easy to change, even for simple copy updates. Website support was delivered by a small offshore company which had previously led to frustrations due to time zone difference and the need to involve them even for content changes.

Skinny needed a robust solution that would allow them to control the day to day updates with the back end support to protect their critical business channel and ensure their customers would always have a positive experience online.



**SilverStripe**  
PLATFORM

## Why SilverStripe Platform?

Skinny's site is built on SilverStripe open source software. To get the best performance they chose a managed platform engineered and optimised specifically for this software. Designed by the company behind the SilverStripe open source software project, it meant Skinny also benefited from years of experience running SilverStripe production servers.

*"Given our site is built on SilverStripe software, it made sense to trust the company behind it to run and protect our site too. Using AWS cloud hosting and SilverStripe Platform management helps us get the best performance out of our SilverStripe site."*

*-Nick Fitt, Skinny Online Systems Support Manager*

### Pay-as-you-use infrastructure

Skinny needed a solution that could handle peaks in traffic caused by tactical marketing campaigns without incurring unnecessary additional costs from over-provisioning. Specialising in pre-paid mobile they quickly recognised that a similar "pay as you use" approach to infrastructure was the smartest solution.

Driven by Amazon Web Services (AWS), SilverStripe Platform offered a robust and reliable hosting solution that elastically matches visitor traffic on-demand. This meant that Skinny's site isn't slowed by peaks in traffic and they only pay for what is used. Harnessing AWS to prevent paying for excess capacity was the logical choice for Skinny. Paul Touhey says,

*"As a growing business ourselves it was an obvious choice to select a platform that has the flexibility to seamlessly expand with demand whilst ensuring we are only paying for what we need".*

With the AWS auto-scaling feature Skinny's marketing team can confidently run tactical promotions without any concerns of the site running slowly or crashing. Designing Skinny's infrastructure involved a myriad of decisions. Skinny were able to leverage SilverStripe Platform's technical experts who tailored the



infrastructure set up to best optimise the system configuration. SilverStripe Platform helps you get the most from your AWS infrastructure and provides Skinny with a future proof solution which can grow their needs.

*"The SilverStripe Platform team's AWS expertise helped us get the best from our infrastructure set up, which was a huge advantage. In one example, the SilverStripe team helped identify a particular page that was being loaded a huge number of times leading to us needing more capacity than expected. The team recommended a solution to change the infrastructure so this page would be served externally from the main website server. It was great to have the team diagnose the problem and solve this to optimise our AWS set up".*

*-Nick Fitt*

## Expert support team

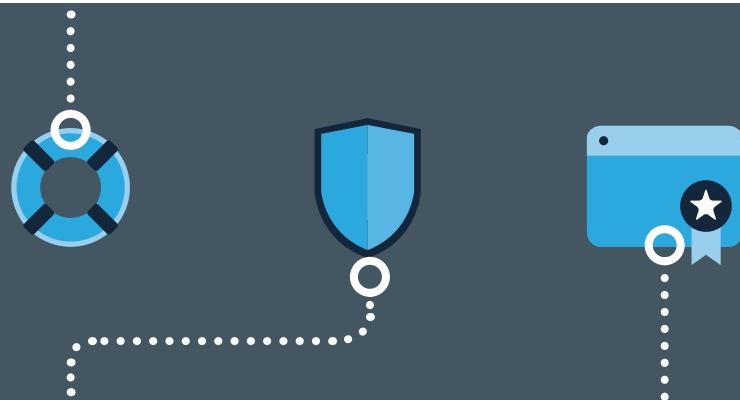
As part of SilverStripe Platform, Skinny also benefits from an expert support team that knows SilverStripe open source software inside and out. This team constantly monitors Skinny's site and responds to issues. This means that Skinny's small IT team isn't further stretched trying to resolve issues themselves or respond after hours.

The dedicated SilverStripe Platform team are alerted by automatic monitoring, and operate 24/7 to prescribed service levels. The team are SilverStripe specialists that can quickly assess issues and solve them permanently. Nick Fitt sees this expertise as a key difference,

*"The strength and knowledge of the SilverStripe Platform team set it apart from*

*other platforms. This expertise was a real benefit to our initial redevelopment project. Now that the site has launched this continues to be a strength as we know our site is in safe hands and any issues will be quickly resolved."*

For example, a P1 (critical) incident that occurred on Skinny's site was resolved and the site back to normal within 20 minutes. A proactive full fix was presented to Skinny within 1 hour and 24 minutes. With the site functioning again, Skinny scheduled the proactive fix to be deployed at 1 am when the traffic was lowest and customer disruption would be minimised.



## Keeping Skinny.co.nz secure

As well as sales, Skinny's customers use the site to manage their accounts. Therefore it is vital that the site is kept secure from malicious attacks. As Nick Fitt explains

*"Security is crucial and the Platform stood up to testing by third party assessment before launch. It's great to know that our site will continue to remain secure as the SilverStripe Platform team are monitoring security advisories and proactively patching to prevent vulnerabilities".*

When the POODLE security threat was discovered, Skinny's site was quickly patched within 24 hours, limiting the chance for a malicious attack against this vulnerability. Skinny can be confident that their important business channel will be kept secure and protected by SilverStripe Platform.

## Taking care of the “housework”

Any website needs a certain level of regular maintenance to keep it running smoothly. Skinny also needed a solution that could cover this. Without attention to upgrades and general code maintenance, a site can quickly become vulnerable as technology advances. Without regular upgrades, Skinny staff would also miss out on new features as software is improved. Skinny decided to add Code Care to their SilverStripe Platform. This additional service takes care of SilverStripe software upgrades and bug fixes for their custom code. This means the development teams working on Skinny's site can stay focused on building new features while avoiding having to hire additional resources to cover ongoing maintenance.

## The benefits

SilverStripe Platform provided the secure and reliable solution Skinny needed. Paul Touhey expressed,

*"We're confident that our critical business channel will be kept running smoothly and we can keep improving and adding features to the site. Our energy can be focused on finding new and innovative ways of connecting with our customers".*

When Skinny's new site launched in June 2014 additional features to continue improving the customer experience and improve efficiency were already planned. SilverStripe Platform is designed to embrace continuous development and includes a powerful, purpose-built deployment tool to ensure a continuously high level of quality even with frequent code changes.

Previously new code releases were slowed by having only two off-shore developers being able to access deployments. Using SilverStripe Platform's deployment tool new features can be tested and pushed live quickly with less chance of issues. A simple user management means that developers from SilverStripe Ltd and DNA can be given access to the testing environment with the production site still well controlled.

Both DNA and SilverStripe Ltd developers can work harmoniously to deploy new code. SilverStripe Platform provides a structure for developers to follow best

practices without their time being consumed with processes.

While working on new features the development teams are shielded from the day-to-day operations involved with keeping Skinny's site running smoothly. SilverStripe Platform goes beyond hosting, allowing Skinny's web team to do their best work. SilverStripe's project manager Joel Edwards had first hand experience running a development project on SilverStripe Platform,

*"The development team were able to really focus all of our efforts on creating an awesome website full of great new features for Skinny customers. We were free from the infrastructure distractions usually involved with running a site of this size. We were then able to focus on the actual development while still knowing that things were being watched over and the site would keep running smoothly."*

SilverStripe Platform ensures that Skinny gets maximum value from their development teams and can confidently introduce new features regularly. With a secure and fully supported platform behind their website, Skinny can keep focusing on finding ways to improve value for their customers.



## Next steps

To learn more about how SilverStripe Platform allows you to focus on developing new features free from the distractions of running and maintaining your site visit:

[silverstripe.com/platform/](http://silverstripe.com/platform/)

To find out about the benefits of Skinny Mobile visit [Skinny.co.nz](http://skinny.co.nz)